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Assistant Majority Leader Kevin de León's Legislation to Invest in Workforce Development for Quality Preschools Clears Its First Policy Committee

SACRAMENTO—Assistant Majority Leader Kevin de León's Assembly Bill 1059, which seeks to invest in workforce development for the State Preschool Program and for California Department of Education (CDE) child care centers, was approved today by the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

"In addition to expanding access to California's pre-Kindergarten programs, we need to make investments to attract and retain workers to this important field," said Assistant Majority Leader De León. "We can improve the quality of preschool experiences for the children attending these programs by promoting the professional development of the workforce."

"These programs serve three- and four-year-olds in low-income neighborhoods. These children will likely be enrolling in elementary schools that are currently ranked in the lower-deciles of the Academic Performance Index (API). Ensuring that these children have the best chances for long-term academic success and economic security requires early education opportunities."

AB1059 would create the "P-APPLE" program for preschool teachers, modeled after the existing Assumption Program of Loans for Education (APLE) program, which provides loan forgiveness for grade K-12 teachers. This bill would also expand upon the existing Child Development Grant Program and the AB 212 (Aroner) Program, which award education stipends for the professional development of child care workers in Title 5 CDE-contracted centers.

Priority for these new loan forgiveness and grant opportunities would be given to teachers and child care workers that are working in publicly-funded schools and child care centers that are located in the attendance areas of elementary schools that are ranked in API deciles 1, 2, and 3.

"California needs to be sure that our children are ready to do their best in Kindergarten," stated Catherine Atkin, President of Preschool California. "Effective preschool programs with well-trained teachers are the way to get children ready, and this bill helps ensure that preschool classrooms have teachers who are ready to do that job."

In December 2005, a RAND Corporation study showed that if all children in California are given the opportunity to attend quality preschools, local communities would see major reductions in high school dropouts, grade retention, special education years, and juvenile crime.

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According to Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, “The research shows that quality preschool programs with well-trained teachers keep kids from becoming criminals – and that saves money and saves lives.”

This measure is sponsored by Preschool California, Children NOW, and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. AB 1059 will next be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

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